

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER

'That which is good for the working class is stern patriotic'

Vol. 1 No. 1
April 1941

The Life and Letters of Feathery Bourke



FEATHERY BOURKE AT THE PENA PALACE,
LISBON, ON JUNE 30TH, 1941.



WHITE'S GARAGE

A MODEST PROPOSAL



A. WHITE LTD

AUTOMOBILE



ENGINEERS



MICHAEL
KENNEDY



ECHOES FROM

- THE -

BOTTOM DOG

"We must look at life in all its aspects from the point of view of the 'Bottom Dog'—the oppressed—be it nation, class, or sex."

NO. 29. 4th MAY, 1918. PRICE ½d.

THE WORKER AND "THE DOG"

*On the green banks of Shannon when I was a boy,
How the B.D. exult! The thought makes me cry,
No Samanite Tannin salted with Oil or Slick Pay.
And the usual "salute" — "Kick him out of the set!"*

*In the dark, cold remarks, then the Gaffers could hold,
When I think of it now, how it leaves me stone cold.
From poor, crested villages, their heads bent and low,
Oh, we must be thankful for Transports, to-day.*

*Off the wallet with your, worn face in the place,
But go, Déda — God reward you on her best face,
Oh, she lagged in bare feet many a bitter black day.
Can't you see the Capitalists? Bloodsuckers, not they!*

*When I last I was forced from my garret to part,
I found it God spared me. I was then sick at heart.*

*For love no atom unturned, by foul means or fair
no.
Our old none deserved worker was Top Dog of the way.*

*The long lane without turning is hard to be found,
But your soul melt that Tuesday when Labour
marched round,
Yes, raise your banners with loud up hurrah,
"Labour must rule" / over, King for the Day.*

*Where "the Pup" shall now go? You're mistaken or blind,
If you think he'll walk muzzled, subdue to be tamed,
In his own native village watchdog Bow shall hold away,
Later on to the Peace Conference he'll poke his own way.*

—K.L.

NO. 30. 11th MAY, 1918. PRICE ½d.

CONNOLLY'S ANNIVERSARY

"To wish is of slight moment, thou oughtest to desire with earnestness to be successful". — Ovid.

How truly do those words written centuries ago find in the human mind an answer today. When James Connolly led his faithful band along the

Liffey's banks on that memorable Easter morning, the wish for the overthrow of a tyranny, political or economic, had long since been transformed into a burning desire, and that desire into the action of which was destined to be his doom. Tyranny in all its forms has power for its bulwark, and force for its buckler. To deprive it of its power would be to make a revolution, and to meet its force the exercise of force would be essential. But force was the only means, (the weapon) and it might take different forms — military, political, economic, or physical, or moral. The desire to overthrow that system would not be the revolution, the revolution could only come when the act of overthrowing the prevailing system had been accomplished. James was a B.D. Whilst working in the sewers in Dublin, he wrote the first chapters of "Labour in Ireland", and it was also during that time that he intended set up and printed the first issues of "The Workers' Republic". "Be what nature intended you and you will succeed". James was by nature intended for a leader of men; to him belongs the greatest intellect and most selfish heart that Labour has given to Ireland in our day. James is dead, but Ireland lives, and the seed that was sown by his hand must be cultivated. Labour must be of good heart. Solidarity amongst its various unions must be achieved. Labour must not wait in the hope that freedom will come to it in the slums. Labour must cut its way through knowledge and action, guided by knowledge which will enable us to clear the tangles and rocks in the path to emancipation. All that is just and good will be with the workers in the struggle...

LIMERICK IS BEAUTIFUL AS EVERYBODY KNOWS.

If any artist attempts to sing the song for the "Colleen Bawn" which opens thus, tell the artist — you're a damned liar and I'll prove it. If Gerald Griffin's ghost appears tell the ghost to do a prowl around by the Irishtown. Let the ghost enter into White Wine Lane and Jones's Row, where he will turn purple with love for the Eily O'Connor of the mud-excreta covered with asphalt. Oh God! Is there outside Hell anything approaching the conditions under which the poor are forced to live in 17 Jones's Row? Merciful Heavens! White's Lane is the same, Pump Lane, Dixon's Lane, Hell's Lane, Walke's Lane, Purchie's Lane, Upper Carey's Road and Roxboro Road all bereft of sanitary convenience. Boys, girls, men and women eat, drink, sleep and wash in these dens. 1,842 houses in Limerick are "unfit for human habitation". Rent is squeezed from the poor of these houses by owners, and if poverty sends the rent behind the curses of an ex-R.I.C. pensioner or

a doctor's wife are poured over the people's heads. Go ye into the lanes off Parnell Street, raise the standard of revolt among the denizens thereof! It is against the laws of God and man to leave these helpless beings any longer in chains. Put your backs against the walls and shout, shout, shout — "Pay no rent! Pay no rent!" Raise the standard of Christ high! Make Limerick ring with your shouting, and topple over the edifices of your wrath on the heads of Pearse, Winters, Patsy Doyle, McMahon, Manning, Mrs. Cahill, Nunan, Hayes, Mrs. Boucke, Mulcahy, Welphy, etc. Cast these fiends from you! If you meet them in a theatre call on the people to howl them out of it. Don't leave a stone unturned until you make them pay dearly for their crimes of years standing. 1,213 houses in Limerick are "unfit for habitation" because 1,213 houses have no water-closets. Christianity — Pshah! 1,213 human sewerage dens are owned by Limerick people, and you can crawl-hump — and they crawl-hump! 1,213 houses, containing approximately 6,055 persons, without water-closets! Can anyone tell us why the owners of 1,213 houses without water-closets are not prosecuted? What of the Public Health Act? Has it become inoperative? If an owner fails to put a house in sanitary condition the Corporation must do it. Why, then, is it not done? Will Prendegast, O'Connor, Davies, Johnson and Gleeson, who represent the Glenworth Ward answer? Demand an answer and see that you get it! Why does O'Donovan, Dalton, Downey, Greaney, and O'Callaghan of the Irishtown Ward knuckle under to the murderers of the children. These two wards must be tackled at once and if the Councillors and Aldermen don't do it, we suggest that the people themselves take the law into their own hands — Pay no rent for houses unfit for human habitation, and keep on paying no rent until approved accommodation is forthcoming. The guts, excreta, dogs and children rolled up in parcels in the lanes and alleys of Limerick (and left to dry and rot) because no man of grit can be found to tackle the slum owners. Talk, talk, talk. Besides 1,213 houses are without water-closets. Limerick is "beautiful" with 599 other houses unfit for human habitation. In his report, dated 7th November, 1916, Dr. E.J. O'Riordan, M.R.C.V.S., Inspector under the Dairies and Cowsheds Order, stated that he visited all cowsheds and cattle under his supervision, and found all the cattle healthy and the cowsheds clean. Pigs, sows, cows, horses, cats, live well and are clean in Limerick. Christ's image and likeness are left in sewerage stewing, stewing until — oh merciful Heavens — until Limerick's young manhood Christianises it. Up lads! Give it to them hot and — no surrender! — W.J.L.

UNNATURAL ACTIVITY

I have studied such methods for years and I admit that I could never see anything "natural" in the fact that a woman should be obliged to stick a thermometer up her rectum at frequent intervals and afterwards carry out a feverish and detailed study of the temperature charts in a manner reminiscent of a disorientated manner. In fact the whole procedure strikes me as being ludicrous, unhygienic and somewhat vulgar. I am old-fashioned enough to believe that meaningful sex should be mutually spontaneous rather than scientifically calculated.

(Dr. Patrick Leahy, *Irish Times*, 16/1/74)

DE BURCA'S JUSTICE

On Wednesday, February 20th, following exchanges with Justice M. de Burca, during a Limerick District Court case, solicitor, Gordon Hayes, was found "in contempt of court". He was fined £2, with two months to pay, and recognisances were fixed in the event of an appeal.

The clash arose out of allegations made by Gordon Hayes that his clients, two brothers, had been savagely assaulted by the police, that one had his hand broken and that the other had a broken skull. The brothers were jointly charged with obstructing two policemen at Shanaboley Road on January 4th.

The incident began when, as a result of a complaint, Gardai John McCarthy and Frank Gunn went to 25 Shanaboley Road. The latter garda claimed, during evidence at the court case, that the two brothers, Patrick and Desmond Kelly, were continually arguing with their father, Michael, using foul language and threatening assaults on him. Garda Gunn stated that in order to prevent a breach of the peace he and Garda McCarthy went to the upstairs but were obstructed by Patrick Kelly. He continued:

We tried to argue with him and he resisted. Desmond Kelly made an obstruction and said we were not going to arrest his brother. He said he would get a baton and was upstairs. He came down with a baton. We decided to arrest him as well, but due to the presence of the knife, we decided to go for some help.

In concluding his defence, Gordon Hayes pointed out that it was very strange that one Garda should accuse a defendant had a knife and another Garda should not have heard about it until the court case. During his evidence, Desmond Kelly denied having a knife or threatening to get a baton.

Garda John McCarthy, in the course of his evidence, stated: "None of them (the defendants) came voluntarily. I was resistance all the way". Gordon Hayes said: "He (Desmond Kelly) will allege that both you and Garda Gunn assaulted them savagely and that one had his hand broken the following day".

Justice de Burca intervened and, following exchanges with Gordon Hayes, threatened: "If you cannot substantiate this, it will not be good for your clients". Hayes replied: "I am well aware of the court's attitude".

After Hayes had declined to withdraw this statement, de Burca stated: "Mr. Hayes, you are in contempt of court. I will ask you to withdraw that. I will come back at 2.30. If at that time, there is no apology, I will commit you for contempt".

When the court resumed, de Burca made no attempt to discredit the solicitor, and Hayes continued to cross-examine the police witnesses. He said: "The defendant (Desmond Kelly), who has only one hand, will say he was hit with a baton. If the defendants say they were black and blue and one had a broken skull. Did you hear 'my hand, I have only one hand' you are hurting my arm?"

Garda Gunn replied: "I did not hear any scuffle. There may have been a conversation".

During his evidence, Patrick Kelly stated:

My father asked what happened and he was told by the Gardai to shut up... They came up and tore us out of the bedrooms... there were six or

seven gardai. When we got to the station, we were beaten. Garda McCarthy came into the cell and he mentioned a colleague of his in 1966 and said something to the effect of getting a transfer because of me. I called for a doctor and he said: 'I will get you a doctor'. The gardai who brought us out struck us in the van. My brother was nursing. I was maimed in blood and there were marks all over my body. I was covered in blood and there was a rash big enough. I was made wash it off. They said they could not let me out in that condition. We ran down the whole way to Barrington's and the doctor came and my head was looked after. I needed stitches.

The second brother, Desmond Kelly, told the court:

I saw them at the door and across the room and beaten viciously. I thought it was the end of the world. I said: 'I am walking, I have only one arm', but they just kept beating me in the one part. I was thrown down on the floor of the van and it was dark, but there were six or seven Gardai in the van, too... We were beaten... I said: 'Let me alone'. At the station, Garda McCarthy came in and said: 'I will put your head through that wall'. I replied it would be very easy to do that to me with only one arm. So they walked out and one Garda said: 'I never know that he had only one arm'. I got two digs in the station, and they kicked my brother all round the floor - that's Paka. There was blood on my arm. My doctor at Barrington's can verify this. I was X-rayed seven times at Barrington's. All this obstruction is a lie.

In summing up the case, de Burca stated: "There are two areas of contradiction and I have to make up my mind what side to believe. It might have helped if the defence would support the allegations against the gardai".

When Hayes attempted to make the suggestion, "If you want to adjourn the case..." de Burca cut in and said: "I will deal with you at the end of the list". Hayes replied: "I am prepared to discuss that matter with you". De Burca added that there was no evidence from the hospital to support the injuries claimed. He then went on to sentence Patrick Kelly to three months' imprisonment, and his brother, Desmond, to one month.

When de Burca had dealt with a number of other cases, Detective Sergeant Christy Ryan conveyed a message to Hayes informing him that he was required in court. On his arrival the Justice said: "I have held you in contempt", Hayes stated: "What I did say, I did not in contempt". De Burca replied: "I did regard it as contempt, and as very contemptuous... I will find you in contempt. I am very loathe to do something like this, but I am forced to. Your conduct here over the last few years is something I disapprove of. I fine you £2".

Hayes interjected: "I have no intention of paying it". De Burca continued: "... two months to pay in default, fourteen days imprisonment". Hayes went on: "... and I find it very regrettable you should find it contemptuous". The exchanges ended with de Burca saying: "You are not to have any facilities in the office here. I will not have people behaving in this manner". Hayes asked: "Will you fix recognisances in the event of an appeal?" De Burca said he would, fixing £2 and £2, and said to Inspector Con McCarthy that if the case was appealed the inspector and the other gardai present would take note and be witness of what had taken place in court that day.

Justice de Burca's remark to Hayes, "Your conduct here over the last few years is something I disapprove of", explains much about the attitude

of the Justice to the solicitor and clearly influenced the verdict of "contempt of court". Some of the background of the relationship between the two men was outlined in an article titled, *The Law in Limerick*, in the November 1973 edition of the *Limerick Socialist*.

The legal Mafia in Limerick (Justice de Burca, solicitors, senior police and prison officers) look upon Gordon Hayes as an interloper, an intruder into their cosy little closed-shop world of arse-licking and back-scratching. Long after the local trade union movement has dismantled the father-and-son job tradition, this strong relationship still continues in the legal profession and in other professional classes in Limerick.

In contrast with the obsequious servility of most of the other local solicitors when appearing before de Burca, Gordon Hayes came along and rocked the boat by being the first local solicitor who was not afraid to stand up to the District Justice and defend his clients to the very best of his ability. When he started to challenge the Bench's view of the absolute incorruptibility of the police, he was soon marked down for retaliation by both Bench and police.

De Burca and the obsequious solicitors, being part of the privileged Establishment, look upon the police as preservers of their privileges, and in the interests of self-preservation are prepared to grant to the police the status of complete inviolability. Their philosophy is: "If the police are exposed, then so are we and all our privileges". The solicitors' clients, being largely of the working class, can be sacrificed to this philosophy.

The similarity between de Burca's threat to Hayes, "If you cannot substantiate this, it will not be good for your clients", and the words of detective/inspector Gerry O'Sullivan to Hayes during a court case last September, "If you pursue this course, it will be all the worse for your clients", has already been noted by many people. The "contempt of court" decision can therefore be seen as a calculated attempt to "get" and silence Hayes and his clients.

Gordon Hayes has let it be publicly known that he intends to take his appeal to the highest court in the land. There are two alternative claims open to him. One, that there was no contempt of court in the first instance, as a solicitor has a right - and duty - to defend his clients to the best of his ability by introducing all relevant evidence, even if this is displeasing to the police. Two, that even if a contempt had been committed, the Justice had no power to pass a sentence of fourteen days' imprisonment. According to all legal precedents, the maximum penalty to be passed on a lawyer in such circumstances is seven days. There is also the further consideration that de Burca had no authority to prevent Hayes from availing of the facilities of the court offices.

As Gordon Hayes has stated on the "Tangents" television programme, the attitude and "contempt of court" decision hacks at the foundation of democracy and legal justice. The article in the November 1973 edition of this paper concluded: "But Hayes can expect that the efforts to discredit and ultimately silence him will increase. Against powerful odds, he has set out to try to bring much-needed and long-overdue reforms to the legal system in Limerick. It is time more people joined him in his work and in bringing the struggle into the open". This time has now arrived, and the struggle is in the open. The work and future of Gordon Hayes are now in the balance on the loaded scales of justice. The weight of public and legal opinion could do much to even up matters. This weight must be immediately applied.

"FEATHERY DIDN'T OWN MONEY -
MONEY OWNED HIM"
(Comment heard in Cornmarket Row)

The Life and Letters of Feathery Bourke

A GREED FOR GROUND RENTS

Desmond O'Grady in his poem, "Memories Of An Influential Uncle", published in the short-lived magazine, "Poetry Ireland", in 1968, commented on Feathery Bourke's "sham inheritance - his mother's empire". An article in the Limerick workers' paper, "The Bottom Dog", as far back as May 11th 1918, criticised Mrs. Lil Bourke and other sham landlords and urged tenants to take strong action against them. Feathery and his mother frequently faced the wrath of their tenants and were also confronted by angry demonstrations in High Street and Cornmarket Row.

Lil Bourke died on September 17th 1927, and all her property and most of her money passed to Feathery. (His sister, Annie, got a smaller share of the money). In the years that followed the Estate Duty Office, Dublin Castle, attempted to secure death duties on Lil Bourke's money and property. Feathery actively resisted these claims and engaged the Limerick firm of solicitors, Philip G. O'Sullivan and Sons to act for him. After Feathery had submitted that his efforts had been solely responsible for "the great bulk of the money", accumulated in the years of the First World War during 1914-18, that he had started a business in opposition to his mother, and that he had also commenced some new trading in the garage business, O'Sullivan received the following letter from the Estate Duty Officer.

27th January, 1937.

A Chirde,

With reference to your letters of the 2nd ultimo and previous correspondence I am directed by the Revenue Commissioners to say that according to the statement made in the case submitted to Colenso "the great bulk of the money" was accumulated during the period 1914-1918, during which Deceased's business was carried on by your client alone. The Commissioners are unable to accept the contention that while being so engaged, your client started a business in opposition to that of his mother (which was long established) and also commenced trading in a different line (viz. the motor garage) and brought those new business (to which he could not devote his whole time) to the pitch of earning considerable profits in those four years.

It would appear that the dealings with the joint deposit account was carried out by Deceased. That this is so is shown by the fact that the sums amounting to £8,000 which were withdrawn from the current account and lodged to credit of the joint deposit account appear in the former account as debits to Deceased and further, by the fact that your client's name was withdrawn from the joint deposit from 22nd May to 24th August 1925.

I am directed to add that the claim for duty is maintained and to request that the account be delivered without further delay.

Mise, le mes,
L. O'Donnell,
Controller of Death Duties

After his bitter, though unsuccessful, battle with the death duties office, Feathery continued to acquire further property and ground rents. The period 1937-1940 showed him working at full stretch in his efforts to add to his wealth. A financial statement on March 31st, 1937 showed some of his money and stock at this time:

Deposits London	£4,100 17s
Deposits Limerick	£1,400 12s
Cash	£ 285 00
Stock	£1,800 00
Total	£7,586 99

This statement did not include the extensive property and ground rents owned by Feathery throughout the country and the £2,205 exchanged by him at the Westminster Bank in London in 1933 and kept locked away in his own private safe. In 1937 he wrote to firms in Dublin, Cork, Belfast, London, Birmingham, Beckenham, Waterford, Dundalk, Derry, Sligo, Ballinasloe, Portlaoise and other places seeking to buy ground rents. A letter written by him on August 31st 1937 to a firm of general merchants named Wisdom of 153 Kent House Road, Beckenham, Kent, gives an indication of the type of ground rent purchase Feathery was after:



FEATHERY BOURKE ON ONE OF HIS FIRST CRUISES

Dear Sir,

Yours of the 30th to hand with a photograph, for which I thank you.

If you are prepared to accept an offer which would leave me 50% yearly over the gross amount of capital invested I would be glad to hear further from you.

He continued to invest his money in ground rents, and in this period acquired the ground rents of houses in O'Connell St., Cecil St., Henry St., Lr. Mallow St., Mungr St., High St., Lansdowne Park, Roden St., Roden Lane, Gabbett's Yard, Westfields, Long Avenue and other local areas. He also secured the ground rents of the City Home, the Tivoli Cinema, the Technical Institute and the Stella Restaurant, 116 O'Connell St. In 1940 he wrote to every firm of solicitors in Galway seeking to buy ground rents in that city.

By this time the income tax authorities were hot on his trail. With the assistance of Joseph Purcell Income Tax Repayment Agency, 89 O'Connell St., Feathery modestly estimated his yearly profit as £357 and, accordingly, his income tax for 1938 was calculated as £48. 7. 6. The following year, again with the services of Joseph Purcell, his income tax was reduced to £27. 9. 0 for the year. In many of the business transactions at this time, Feathery's brother-in-law, Leonard O'Grady, a C.I.E. clerk, acted as his agent and generally assisted with the business correspondence.

In June 1941 Feathery pulled off yet another of his business coups. The story began when he spotted an advertisement in the press, and he immediately made up his mind about his course of action. The advertisement stated that Thomas Dockrell Son & Co., Ltd., South Great George's St., Dublin, would on Thursday 26th June, 1941, be auctioning, amongst other rents and properties, the ground rent of the St. Vincent de Paul Orphanage, Glasnevin, Dublin, on the instructions of Major D.B. Lindsay and Captain Lionel A. Lindsay, trustees of the will of Lieut. Col. Henry Gore Lindsay. Accompanied by Leonard O'Grady, Feathery travelled to Dublin for the auction.

When they arrived at the auction-room, there was an understanding amongst all the other people present that, after a few purely nominal bids, the Orphanage Committee would be allowed to buy their own ground rent unopposed. However, this charitable intention was quickly sabotaged. Feathery briskly entered the bidding and proceeded to outbid the Orphanage Committee, and in a very short time, and to the amazement and embarrassment of both the auctioneers and the public, he bought the ground rent of the Orphanage. In an auction-room filled with confusion and hostility, Feathery and O'Grady soon became the centre of attraction as all eyes focused on them. Unabashed, Feathery paid his money, collected the documents and, with O'Grady, travelled back to Limerick, well satisfied with his profitable day's work.

If the ground rent had been a small one of a few pounds a year, the situation would not have been too bad for the Orphanage Committee. But,

as it happened, this was to be one of the biggest rents that Feathery was ever to acquire in a long lifetime of buying and selling the ground under other people's names. The ground rent from the Orphanage was £1.50 per annum. This would have been a substantial sum of money for most people to find, but for an Orphanage run by private charity - to the austere years of the Second World War, it probably represented food for the orphans.

J.A. Rafferty, president of the Orphanage Committee, three weeks after the auction, wrote to Feathery asking him if he would consider selling the ground rent to the Committee and explaining that the money thus saved would be of considerable help in the charitable work. He also emphasised that the Committee was prepared to offer a price that would provide a profit for Feathery. Rafferty's letter dated 19th July, 1941, stated:

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

9, Vincent de Paul Orphanage,
Limerick, Ireland.

Dear Sir:

The Committee of the above Orphanage have asked me to approach you with regard to your recent purchase of the ground rent of £1.50 per annum by the bidder on your request that you would consider an offer from us to purchase the ground rent over a period of time at the figure of £1.00 per annum to provide the income of 25th July. This sum is to begin in the share which has to be paid originally.

It would be most satisfactory if you could accept the offer of the Committee to be able to do so, as it would be a considerable annual sum to the Orphanage. It would be measured in the terms of a few years. I am confident that a purchaser who will only have an obligation of the income for a few years which would not be a material charge, but a sum to the Orphanage in excess of £100. The Orphanage will be in a position, towards the latter part of the year, to offer the advantage of a reduction and to add a sum that much money towards the progress of the charity, etc. in education and training of the children.

It is all these reasons that the Committee have asked me to approach you. They understand that you were not aware when bidding at the Auction that they were anxious to purchase the liability. This encourages them to think that you may be favourably disposed to consider their appeal. They do not wish to suggest one should be at any loss if you transfer the purchase to them and hence they are prepared to pay something more than the price paid by you.

If you are willing to consider helping us in this way your Solicitor could get in touch with the firm who will act for us in this matter, Messrs. Corrigan & Corrigan, 5 St. Andrew Street, Dublin, and come to an arrangement with them.

Yours faithfully,
J.A. Rafferty,
President,
Orphanage Committee.

But the plight of the young orphans did not soften Feathery's heart. In a letter to the Committee he made it clear that there was no "misunderstanding" whatsoever about the matter and that he had no intention of taking any easy or "diplomatic" way out. He stated that he would only consider parting with the ground rent for a sum equivalent to twenty-eight years' rent. This sum would have come to £3,892, a comparative fortune in 1941 (its equivalent today would be £40,000). Feathery's typewritten reply to the

Orphanage Committee, does not bear his usual style of writing and was obviously composed by Leonard O'Grady. The letter, dated 22nd July 1941, stated:

Dear Sir,

I have received your letter of the 19th instant and note its contents.

It is true that the advantage to me of this rent can be measured by the few remaining years of my life, but then, it was to provide for these years that I bought it and I am quite satisfied with my purchase. On the other hand, the value of this rent in your hands is not determinable by time and at 28 years purchase, reckoning on your own basis of

valuation, it would be cheap at this price to you. You will agree that such a security could not be purchased by me today at less than that figure, if obtainable at all, and if I am to be prompted into parting with this rent it would only be at the figure I have stated, viz. 28 years purchase on the £1.50 per annum.

The Orphanage did not give Feathery the £3,892 asked for, but this did not matter to him. In the thirty-two remaining years to his death he collected £4,448 from the Orphanage by way of annual ground rent payments - £556 more than his original demand.

(To be concluded)

LIST OF SOME OF THE GROUND RENTS OWNED AND COLLECTED BY THE LATE MICHAEL "FEATHERY" BOURKE UP TO THE END OF 1964

RENT COLLECTED FROM

J.R. Sheehy, 1 Midgrave St.
P. Hayes, 9 William St.
Mrs. Joan B. McMahon
Bennett & Thompson
Molsworth St., Dublin.
Mrs. A. Hanrahan, Finglow
Hse., Newmarket-on-Fergus.
Mr. P.J. O'Sullivan
Bishop of Limerick
Mr. Thomas Phibkett

Mr. F.G. Dowdes, "Sundury"
Ballincollig, Limerick.
Mrs. E. Hynes.

Mrs. E. O'Brien

Mr. A.S. Wolphy,
65 O'Connell St., Link.
Messrs. Battersby & Co.,
39 Westmoreland St., Dub.
Mr. G. Alford

Department of Education
Department of Defence
Thomond Laundry, Henry St.,
Limerick

Mr. J.B. McMahon
P.J. O'Dwyer,
90 O'Connell St., Link.
D. Downes & Co.,
23 Glentworth St., Link.
St. Vincent de Paul Orphanage
Glasnevin, Dublin.
Messrs. Allen Townsend
10 Stephens Green N., Dublin
Miss G. Savin

Richard Williams
James Nash & Sons
85 O'Connell St., Limerick
United Drug Co. Ltd.,
Ballina, Co. Mayo

D. Downes & Co.,
23 Glentworth St., Link.
D. Downes & Co.,
23 Glentworth St., Link.
Mrs. E. Hynes

Messrs. Battersby & Co.,
39 Westmoreland St., Dublin
James Nash & Sons,
85 O'Connell St., Link.

IN RESPECT OF

76 O'Connell St., Link.
4 Cornmarket Row, Link.
79 O'Connell St., Link.
Dublin

Mornington Park, Artane.
Belfield, Ennis Rd., Link.

Clannorris Ave., Link.
Portland House, Link.
Bungalow, Mornington Pk.,
Artane, Dublin.

Bedford Row, Link.

High St. & Black Bull Lane,
Limerick.

Ard Cuan, Clannorris Ave.,
Limerick.

Bedford Row & Henry St.,

Limerick.

Rathfarnham, Dublin.

St. Helens, Mornington Pk.,
Artane, Dublin.

Model School, Link.

Sarsfield Barracks, Link.

77 O'Connell St., Link.

78 O'Connell St., Link.

Edward St., Link.

Bedford Row, Limerick.

Orphanage

High St. & Cornmarket Row,
Limerick

80 & 81 O'Connell St., Link.

20 Henry St., Link.

Wolfe Tone St., Link.

Limerick Branch

20 Henry St., Link.

Bedford Row, Link.

Bedford Row & Little
Gerald Griffin St., Link.

High St. & Black Bull

Lane, Limerick.

Rathfarnham Rd., Dublin.

Bedford Row and Henry St.,

Limerick

ANNUAL RENT

£ 28.50

£ 6.50

£ 12.15

£ 52.00

£ 12.50

£ 7.00

£ 4.00

£ 20.00

£ 66.70

£ 30.00

£ 7.00

£ 62.25

£ 57.15

£ 12.00

£ 12.00

£ 2.10

£ 28.30

£ 14.20

£ 14.45

£ 101.55

£ 139.35

£ 9.20

£ 26.10

£ 13.15

£ 11.55

£ 13.15

£ 37.20

£ 92.55

£ 52.00

£ 116.00

£ 36.85

NOTE:

Feathery Bourke is also known to have purchased additional Ground Rents between 1964 and his death in 1973.

08922

THE GARAGE AND THE APPRENTICE

BY PAT FEELEY

THE 1955 Factories Act, which governs the working conditions in garages, will never be mistaken for a workers' charter. It is a piece of legislation ostensibly designed to give workers minimum necessary job conditions. Its primary concern appears to be the protection of the life and health of the worker. The rights of the free enterprise system and the interests of the employing class also straddle it. Many sections carry a rider like the following: "The Minister may by certificate grant, subject to any conditions specified in the certificate, exemption from compliance with any of the requirements where he is satisfied that compliance with the requirement is unnecessary or impracticable". Given therefore, its limited scope and its practical limitations, it is all the more important that the basic conditions laid down should be strictly adhered to and that inspectors from the Department of Labour should diligently pursue their enforcement. This is not done.

One cannot but be struck by the bleakness and harshness of working conditions in most garages. Wide doors opening out to the north or south iron roofs, bare rafters. In winter time the cold in some of these places is savage. Shivering customers reassure themselves that mechanics are muted in the cold and there is some truth in this as many mechanics will testify. However, there is at least one case in Castleisland (Co. Kerry) where a man's health has been seriously and permanently impaired. A man, a mechanic, married with five children, setting what he then considered to be a cold continued working, ending up with pneumo-pneumonia, a collapsed lung, a stint in Pearmain Hospital, a year out of work on sickness allowance. His employer, a Knight of Columbanus, studiously avoided a visit. Needless to say, it would be difficult to prove that his illness was caused by conditions in his place of work without the testimony of a doctor and that was unlikely to be forthcoming, moral cowards that they are. Section 12 of the Factories Act lays down that a "reasonable temperature" should be maintained in each workshop. It is more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

In the garage business the apprentices are at the bottom of the toodle-pie and they fare worst, if general conditions are bad. This writer knows of one garage in North Kerry which would make the Tolpuddle Martyrs blanch. It is closer to a house of horrors than a house of industry: if you don't get pneumonia from the full blast of the north

wind, or break your neck in the ubiquitous pools of oil and grease, or fall into the pit fed by an underground spring, you risk being electrocuted by live wires and dangling sockets. The garage employs one apprentice. After six months an anthropologist would be hard put to prove that the Irish were a Caucasian people. However, this is an exception to all the rules.

This article proposes to deal specifically with apprentices, their treatment, prospects and working conditions. The following people were interviewed: A garage owner, an official of the I.T.G.W.U., a teacher of apprentices, a qualified mechanic, a group of apprentices, a former apprentice. All expressed a wish to remain anonymous. The general conditions in four Tralee garages were examined.

The I.T.G.W.U. official stated that, together with the hotel workers, garage workers were the most difficult to organise. They would have great power if properly organised, in a strike situation they could cripple the country. The door was open for them. Many of them were birds of passage, flitting from one garage to another; more were budding capitalists doing odd jobs and setting up their own workshops. He gave as his opinion that the first-class mechanic was paid well over the maximum, that second-class mechanics were well-paid too. This led to an "I'm-alright-Jack" attitude in which those at the bottom of the ladder suffered. Apprentices could be paid below the minimum wage. He believed the conditions in some garages were very bad. The number of fully organised garages was very small; in some of the bigger Tralee garages membership was as low as one worker. On apprentices joining, or recruiting for, a union in certain garages he gave as his opinion that they would in all probability be seeking new employment as soon as their activities came to the ears of the bosses.

The garage owner interviewed owns a comparatively small, recently constructed garage in Tralee. The place was cold because he had not installed an oil-fired heating system due to the oil crisis. He agreed that conditions were very bad in some garages, he regarded this as obsolete and believed that there should be a weekly "clean up" of garages. He cleaned his garage every Saturday. He has a highly personal relationship with his staff; he pays a second-year apprentice, who attends classes in the Technical school and all Ango-sponsored courses, £11.50 per week. He said "I intend to take on another apprentice and the money does not matter. But I don't want a 'dunno', I wouldn't take a 'dunno' under any circumstances".

The teacher said that facilities in garages were bad. Washing facilities were inadequate (contravening of section 53 of the Factories Act). Proper eating rooms were non-existent. A percentage of those who went into garages were weak students who had failed the Group Certificate and found it difficult to get any sort of job. He believed employers recognised this and exploited them accordingly. On the other hand some apprentices were highly intelligent with a passion for cars and tinkering with engines. He gave as his overall opinion that apprentices were slave labour for the garage owners and spent most of their time filling petrol, greasing, and washing cars.

The former apprentice is 21, he is now happily employed with C.I.E. He spent three years as an apprentice in a Tralee garage. That time was spent mending punctures, changing lorry tyres, greasing, and changing batteries. Changing a battery, he claimed, was the closest he ever got to the engine. Employers are obliged to allow apprentices to attend classes in a technical school for one day

each week. (Previously a half day was sufficient). He says that there were two apprentices in the garage and the employer allowed them to attend classes on alternate weeks. After a visit from the "apprentice man" school attendance would be more regular but would subsequently lapse.

He started work at £5 a week and was being paid £6 when he left after three years. The employer tried to prevent his signing for the dole; he got his present job within six weeks.

A group of apprentices interviewed were satisfied with their lot. Starting wages ranged from £6.25 - £6.50, from which stamps were deducted. Facilities were "fine" or "as good as could be expected". They buy their own tools and overalls. One apprentice bought three outfits per year at £3 each. They ate their meals off the benches. Inquiries about dining rooms provoked incredulous looks. The first year was spent servicing, mending punctures, putting in light bulbs, helping the mechanics. Common complaints among employers are that apprentices are lazy, unreliable, unpunctual and difficult to train.

Of the four garages visited two were recently built, two older constructions; all had corrugated iron roofs with skylights of corrugated fibre glass or reinforced glass. The walls in three were unplastered. Three were very cold. In all four one toilet bowl served all the male employees; two of these were antiquated. The toilets were dirty and would be unusable for many people. There would seem to be uniform agreement that sodden back issues of *The Irish Independent* are a good substitute for toilet paper. A mechanic in one remarked "The ventilation is good here". On being asked about heating arrangements he pointed to a single bar electric fire which, he said, did not work.

Section 17 of the Factories Act governs sanitary conveniences and stipulates that: "Sufficient and suitable sanitary conveniences for the persons employed shall be provided, maintained and kept clean". And, as previously noted, Section 12 dictates that "a reasonable temperature be maintained in a place of work".

Three of the garages were reasonably clean, the floors being free of oil and grease. The fourth was not. It looked more like a place of wreck than a place of work: a heap of discarded engines and engine parts, scrapped cars in sundry states of delapidation, a mound of paper, cardboard boxes and oil cans, a large pool of water on the floor (contravening Section 10), at least an inch of an oil-water mixture in the pit and an overall grease gloss on the floor (transgressing Section 16 of the Factories Act). In short it was an insult to human dignity to ask anyone to work in the place.

In general one could say of the garages that they are dull, dreary, unimaginatively constructed places to work in. Their overall effect on the workers must be depressing. An industrial psychologist would say they militate against a high standard of work. Recognising this, the high profit on cars, the average £2 an hour charge on repairs, one can only come to the conclusion that the working conditions of their employees do not weigh too heavily on garage proprietors. This survey takes in only the general conditions in one large provincial town but one has a feeling that the findings are fairly representative of conditions throughout the state. At any rate, Mr. Bounderby's fear of the workers being fed on "turkey soup and venison with a gold spoon" is not likely to be immediately realised in Irish garages.

EDITORIAL NOTE: This description of the working conditions in Kerry garages can also be accurately applied to the situation of mechanics and apprentices in Limerick.

WHITE'S GARAGE :

A MODEST PROPOSAL

An article in the January edition of the "Limerick Socialist" described how Michael Kennedy, Cratloe, Co. Clare, after spending 39 years working as a washer and greaser at White's Garage, was forced through ill health to retire from his employment. The garage had been owned by Coleman White, but two months after Kennedy's retirement, new owners took over the business. The new owners were W.G. Bogue, W.R. Brown (U.S.A.), Dr. T.C. McGrath and T.A. Duffy (secretary).

Despite long and patient efforts by Michael Kennedy to secure a small financial settlement to help compensate him for his 39 years' work and painful illness, neither the former nor new owners (in any way obliged to meet his claims) the clients of his solicitor and (only after official advice) to budge the hard-headed and hard-hearted businessman. And so Michael Kennedy was eventually left without any more routes to explore in his quest for a modest measure of justice.

Some people had naively believed that the new wealthy owners of the garage would have been shamed into some type of financial agreement with Michael Kennedy after the manner in which they had been exposed in the paper. However, such people had too confined an appreciation of the think skins and plastic consciousness of the mob concerned.

James Sexton, Kennedy's solicitor, in a letter to the new owners on March 1st, 1973, stated: "It would appear that according to the laws under Redundancy Payments Act 1961 (Michael Kennedy) is not entitled to claim redundancy money. However, he has served the company faithfully over a very long number of years ... Were he entitled to redundancy payments we estimate that he would receive something in the region of

KERRYMAN CAPERS

On the morning of Friday, February 8th, an early news bulletin on Radio Eireann announced that a threat had been made on the life of the editor of "The Kerryman". The threat resulted from an article written by freelance journalist, Con Houlihan, on the Price sisters. The threat "make your last confession" was delivered on the phone to the editor. It was immediately checked with a leading member of the political wing of the Provisional movement, who after some time admitted the threat to be real.

Houlihan, a humanitarian, an admirer of Gandhi and Chavez, has opposed the Provisional campaign from the very beginning and has been subjected to threats for the past two years. However the Price article came at a time when the Provisional movement had collected many signatures asking for the transfer of the "Winchester prisoners" and when feeling was high on the forcible feeding of the hunger-strikers. Houlihan had earlier criticised the Department of External Affairs for not taking a strong line in trying to end the suffering of the young people in a previous issue of the paper.

£200.00".

The sum of £200 sought by Sexton would have meant that Michael Kennedy would have received £5 for every year of his 39 years' service with White's Garage. But the owners rejected this proposal and not only refused to make Kennedy redundant but intensified their efforts to prevent him from getting an award from the Redundancy Appeals Tribunal. The treatment meted out to Michael Kennedy stands out in marked contrast with the owners' attitude to two mechanics who were declared redundant when the garage changed hands. One mechanic was given £800 redundancy money and the other younger mechanic, with far less service than Kennedy, secured £400.

The former owner of the garage, Coleman White, died shortly after his written refusal to consider Michael Kennedy's claim. On May 10th last year his house, Sorrento Cottage, Dalkey, Co. Dublin was sold for £92,000.00. He had received a considerable sum of money for the sale of his garage shortly before his death and was also known to be already a wealthy man at that stage.

It is understood that White's money and property went to the beneficiaries under his will: James White, Curator of the National Gallery, Paddy White, grocer, and Jim White, veterinary surgeon both of Tuam, Co. Clare. The proceeds from the sale of the house, less death duties and fees, are believed to have gone to James White, with the two Clare nephews getting the balance from the sale of the garage and Coleman White's personal money. As a result of this windfall, all three Whites are now very wealthy men.

The new owners of the garage are also wealthy men, having investments in many other local businesses. Michael Kennedy, meanwhile, continues to exist on his meagre social welfare

benefit of £6.55 per week.

In the light of the failure of the new owners to respond to the solicitor's claim for £200 or to react to the strictures contained in the January article, it is obvious that some new strategy is now called for. Faced with a situation where three men have gained considerable sums of money from the garage and four more men are presently drawing further sums from the same garage, it is obvious that a shortage of money is not preventing a settlement. Sexton, the Solicitor, sought £200 for his client, and it should pose little hardship on the two sides (the beneficiaries of Coleman White's wealth and the new owners) to join together in raising this small sum.

For the three Whites this would mean each contributing £33. The burden on the four new owners would be even lighter with each man subscribing £25. The £100 from the Whites would represent a tiny share of the interest on their uncle's money, while the £100 from the four new directors would be about a third of their profit on the sale of one new Opel car (The garage is the main Opel dealer in Limerick).

If the parties have difficulty in raising the £200 perhaps they might consider contacting Dan Langan, one of the Irish directors of Caltex, for some financial help. He would surely be willing to verify that Michael Kennedy was the first man in Limerick to use his company's "Marfax" grease. Kennedy's twisted fingers and distorted hands are a permanent testimony of his diligence in pressing the trigger of the grease-gun to ensure that the "Marfax" grease found its mark.

Between all these wealthy interests the collection of the £200 should raise little problems. It is a modest proposal.

Boal proposal attacked and the stand of "Pauline Carmody" praised.

The article unleashed a flood of letters, most of them venomous in tone and fascist in outlook. Houlihan received a more than usual share of abusive letters and the Gardai kept watch on the homes of the editor, assistant editor and writer. The paper's stand in printing the article was supported by the local chapter of the N.U.J. and there was a congratulatory telegram from Conor Cruise O'Brien. The paper published some letters of support, a number from the safety of foreign countries.

As there had been a recent change of editor, some saw the threat as one aimed at the new editor in the hope that the paper would become less anti-Provisional. (Through his writings, Con Houlihan has done more in destroying the standing of the Provo movement in Kerry than any other individual or agency). An Phoblacht subsequently denied that the action of the local unit had the sanction of headquarters and denied that it opposed free expression of thought.

The incident represents something of a milestone in the struggle in West Munster for freedom of thought and expression. It also exposes the bankruptcy of the Provisionals when confronted with a coherent political and intellectual argument.

A PLACE TO LEAVE

FRANK HAMILTON MOVES ON

Go and stand on a balcony
Shakes a heavy pattern over
And record the angry spoken words
Limerick is a place to leave

These lines from Frank Hamilton's poem, "The London Line", will strike a familiar chord in the minds of many Limerick people at home and away. On the last day of February Hamilton, like many others before him, left Limerick's railway station on the first leg of his journey to London. In his suitcase he carried a manuscript and notebook containing the material for what he hopes will be the first novel on Limerick working class life. He has gone to London to complete the book (tentatively titled, "A Place To Leave") and to find a publisher for it.

The Limerick press has long been a network of ties between the sons, daughters and relatives of newspaper owners, printers and reporters securing all but a few of the decent jobs. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s it would have been unheard of for a local working-class boy to even put his nose into a newspaper to look for a job as a reporter; he wouldn't have had a snowball's chance in hell of getting it. Against this background Frank Hamilton, while employed as a factory worker at Shanahan's, began to contribute unpaid articles to the Limerick newspapers. In early 1971, during the brief period in which Tom Tobin acted as editor of the Limerick Weekly Echo, a vacancy occurred for a junior reporter. Hamilton applied for the job and, at the strength of his previous contributions, Tobin gave him the job. This choice ranks as Tobin's best decision in his unhappy decade in Limerick.

During his three years with the Echo Hamilton produced some of the best weekly journalism in the local press. His articles on Tom Glynn, old Thomondgate, the Bird of Thomond, the 1919 Soviet, the Bottom Dog, deserted wives and the changing face and nature of Limerick all showed his intuitive grasp of working class history and his sharp social consciousness.

Hamilton's departure to London coincided with the first full production of his play, *The Banshee*. The Young College Players presented the play at the Conventerity Theatre on February 24th, 25th and 26th. The action is set on a derelict site near the Simon Community Hostel in Limerick and describes the disillusionment of a young reporter when he comes face-to-face with the realities of capitalist society. The play also exposes how the press serves the system and how the "Simon men" are blinded with hypocrisy and indifference.

The play, which had a directed reading on September 24th last year, burst into life under the skilled and sympathetic control of producer Kitty Bredin on the third and last evening (Feb. 26th). The author was well served by the cast and off-stage assistants. John Gibbons was a memorable "Mull" and fully mastered this demanding role. Sheila O'Doherty played the part of "Nell", the prostitute with tenderness and understanding. Her outstanding performance was a vast improvement on her showing in the directed reading. Johnny Hennessy's portrayal of the young "drop-out" "Solo", was lively and bitterly humourous.

To the central role of "Dave", the young reporter, Michael Coleman brought the right mixture of cockiness and cynical charm. Gladys Bammer, however, was badly miscast as "Cath", the social worker, and was never at ease with the part. This role was obviously written with an idealistic, Maoist-type teenager in mind. The character is not clearly developed and has too much stilted language and cliché-ridden lines to deliver.

Through this character Hamilton looks back on his own childhood in Patrick Street and evokes warm memories of Polly Carr's toyshop. In the "Hungry" fifties when middle-class children got their presents from the big city centre shops, working-class children from Arthur's Quay, Francis Street and Watergate were fortunate indeed if their parents could afford to give them a few pence of bring them on an occasional visit to buy some cheap toys at Polly's old but brightly-coloured shop. In his poem Polly Carr's, Hamilton nostalgically recalls these "treats" and also the blazing bonfire that reduced the shop and the toys to ashes.

Through the ways of ancient stone,
Beside the storied city's throne,
Stood the little shop of Polly Carr,
With its door left half ajar.

Shout the news around the city,
Polly's presents are so pretty.
Shout the news around the town,
Polly Carr's is crumbling down.

Birthday stones we did despair,
With saintly plaques and relics there.
With Polly in a cotton blouse,
And Pope John's, "Bless this House".

Long saved pennies were all spent,
On china, plastic and ornament,
To be given on happier days.
In young, shy and awkward ways.

In the Limerick night,
A light - blazed bright.
The fire brigade raced through the town,
Polly Carr's was burning down.

The presents were crushed to death,
Cardboard cartons were all soaked wet.
Firemen hosed the wallflowers more,
And Polly sadly closed the door.

Shout the news around the city,
Polly's presents were so pretty.
Shout the news around the town,
Polly Carr's is crumbling down.

Shout the news around the city,
Polly's presents were so pretty.
Shout the news to the supermarket,
Polly Carr's is no more.

Gerald Griffin, while employed as a journalist with the Limerick newspaper, *The Advertiser*, wrote an insincere and flattering editorial sketch on the life and character of the Marquis Wellesley, then Lord Lieutenant. Griffin wrote to his mother that it was "my first step into that commanding versatility of principle which is so very useful to newspaper-writers, but it will be my last also".

Over one hundred and fifty years later, Hamilton in his play in an anguished cry from the heart, similarly describes "that commanding versatility of principle which is so very useful to newspaper-writers" in preserving their jobs in capitalist society.

They foster on hypocrisy until they cannot be challenged and the irony is that we find ourselves protecting ... false values for our very survival ... you whore birth of journalism ... you beheading bitch ... we dramatise our minor tragedies ... and suppress our scandal ... we must protect the lies ... There is no freedom ... they ... them ... the order of things ... could not allow it ...

Like two other Limerick poet/journalists before him, Gerald Griffin and John Francis O'Donnell, Frank Hamilton has gone to London to further his literary career. With the exception of Sean Nóske, no other Limerick working-class writer has shown the same ability and compassion in his work. It is to be hoped that Hamilton's stamina will match his single-minded determination. His book, "A Place To Leave" should be well worth waiting for.

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